

SUBJECT: INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY GUIDELINES FOR  
DECLASSIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS CONTAINING  
INFORMATION CONCERNING INTELLIGENCE  
SOURCES AND METHODS

General

Under EO 11652 only the head of an Agency or Department can extend classification protection beyond a thirty year period. These guidelines, therefore, are set forth to enable Agency or Departmental personnel assigned to assist the U.S. Archivist to segregate documents for a classification decision by the Agency head.

The primary purpose of any declassification review is to make available to the general public the maximum amount of data consistent with an obligation to safeguard national security interests. These interests include the protection of sensitive intelligence sources and methods. Such intelligence is identified as that classified intelligence, the unauthorized disclosure of which could lead to counteraction (1) jeopardizing the continued productivity of intelligence sources or methods that provide intelligence vital to the national security or (2) offsetting the value of intelligence vital to the national security. At the risk of oversimplification, "sources" can be identified as the origins of information and "methods" as the ways by which intelligence

data and/or intelligence sources are developed. In many cases sources and methods are inseparable.

Classified materials or information which were received by the United States from foreign governments or international bodies with the express understanding that the information would be protected cannot be declassified without the permission of the donor government or organization.

If it is determined that a document must remain classified but much of the information therein could be released provided certain limited portions (those that identify sources and methods) were excised, this fact should be noted. This will enable archivist personnel to provide sanitized versions of otherwise classified documents to researchers for publication or to the public. However, care should be taken to ensure that the sanitization of a document does not change its meaning.

Detailed Guidance: Names or Identifiable Individuals:

1. Human intelligence sources may be divided into two main categories: conventional and confidential. A conventional source is

a) An individual or official with whom normal, unconcealed, overt contact or liaison is maintained, and

b) Who provides all types of intelligence information with the permission of his government, and

c) Under normal circumstances, his identity, relationship and connection with intelligence is known.

A confidential source is one whose identity cannot be disclosed because

a) He revealed information which is protected or not authorized for release by his country, or the organization to which he is attached, or

b) Revelation of his association with or the nature of his association with US intelligence agencies must be protected because his government requires it, or

c) The information he has provided could be used as grounds for criminal or civil charges against him, or

d) His known association with any representative of a US intelligence service would be prejudicial to him.

As a general rule, conventional sources do not require continued protection, while documents containing information which might reveal the identities of confidential sources should remain classified to protect the fiduciary relationship between a source and US intelligence. However, the information in the document containing the names of confidential sources may be declassified provided the identity of the sources can be protected.

Information on confidential sources cannot be prematurely disclosed in cases where:

a) Disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause a degree of harm to national security by adversely affecting the motivation of current and future potential human intelligence sources to provide intelligence information to United States intelligence.

b) Disclosure would place a person in immediate jeopardy.

2. Documents revealing the identities of liaison officers from cooperating foreign intelligence or counterintelligence services who are confidential sources cannot be declassified without the permission of the foreign government concerned.



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by statute including the Freedom of Information Act. Such documents will retain their classification based only on other content.

5. Any report containing information the disclosure of which would place an identifiable person in immediate jeopardy cannot be declassified.

Detailed Guidance: Intelligence Methods

1. Sensitive intelligence methods which must be afforded protection beyond the 30-year mandatory review period include information concerning or revealing techniques of agent recruitment, nonofficial and other unconventional cover arrangements, deception techniques, methods and equipment employed for covert communications, technical surveillance devices and strategies, microphotographic methods and equipment, escape and evasion techniques, provided that such methods are not essentially identical to those universally employed by intelligence services and therefore widely known, or that advances in technology have not rendered such methods and supporting equipment entirely obsolete. Documents containing information which would reveal the true names of cover organizations which are still in existence require continued protection.

2. Methods related to logistical and other support activities -- as opposed to intelligence collection and covert action techniques --

adapted to the particular operations and circumstances, do not in themselves qualify as sensitive methods requiring continued protection.

3. Information with respect to the internal organization of US intelligence units, the chain of command, component functional missions and personnel ceilings, and intercomponent working relationships has lost much of its sensitivity with the passage of time. Moreover, a considerable amount of this sort of information has already appeared in open literature.. Unless otherwise protected by statute, such information can be declassified in accordance with the provisions of EO 11652.

Detailed Guidance: Communications Intelligence and Cryptography

1. Communications intelligence cryptography, and related activities must be provided with protection from premature disclosure. Included are any data concerning or revealing the processes, techniques, technical material and equipment, particular operations and overall scope of communications intelligence, and cryptographic security. The date for declassification of such information, being dependent upon the factor of obsolescence, is therefore impossible to predetermine.

2. Declassification of US Communications.

Unencrypted messages transmitted electrically will be declassified under provisions of EO 11652. Declassification of encrypted messages will be accomplished in accordance with the following policy:

a) Messages Encrypted Prior to February 1, 1946

Declassification of messages in this category has been and will continue to be based solely on the informational content of the messages.

b) Messages Encrypted During the Period February 1, 1946 through May 31, 1960

The requirement that messages in this category (so-called category "B" messages) be paraphrased and the date-time group physically removed prior to declassification is cancelled. Effective immediately, declassification of such messages will be based solely on the informational content of the messages.

c) Messages Encrypted Subsequent to May 31, 1960

Communications Centers have received instructions to perform necessary cryptographic editing on these messages prior to release from the Communications Center. Declassification of messages in this category by holders outside Communications Centers is based

solely on the informational content of the messages. Further cryptographic editing is not required.

Detailed Guidance: Subject Matter Content

1. Intelligence documents and other record media, regardless of the subject, which contain information which would reveal intelligence sources or methods, the origin of which can be clearly traced to other US Government Agencies should not be declassified unilaterally by the holding Agency. Such information or material can only be declassified after consultation with any other Department having an interest in the subject matter.

2. US intelligence documents containing classified information which would reveal intelligence sources and methods and which was passed to US intelligence by foreign governments or international organizations should not be declassified without the concurrence of the foreign government or international organization concerned.